

ROSE STANDARDS

by Albert Ford

(adapted from the September – October MRS Newsletter)

Roses seeming to grow from the top of a hardwood cane, stalk or trunk are termed a tree rose or rose standard. Tree roses are available as miniatures and hybrid tea sized plants. They are beautiful to see growing among other garden plants. They stand erect and bear many blooms at a time and flower all during the season. Years ago I purchased a rose standard, **Snowfire**, by name. The flowers were red in color with a white reverse, a very striking rose. I enjoyed it all of one year. Although I tried to protect it over the first winter with an improvised netting filled with a mulching material, it did not make it to the following year.

At the time, the recommended method of winter protection for standards was to cut the roots on one side of the standard, dig a trench on the other side and push the entire plant into the trench and cover it with soil, leaves or other material. This arduous method didn't appeal to me in the least. That was my only experience with trying to grow a rose standard in my garden. It is interesting though that I did made a cutting from **Snowfire** that first year, so I did have the rose for a number of years afterwards as a hybrid tea, but not as a rose standard.

Recently, Bartie Cole, Maryland Rose Society member and Program Chairperson of the Horticultural Society of Maryland, advised your editor that she has used a new winter protection method for her tree roses with good success and believed the method might be of interest to our readers.

Bartie owns and manages one of the finer private gardens in this area. She is an avid gardener and her garden profits from her research and travels to other gardens in the United States. Bartie has made good use of roses in the overall design of her garden in Owings Mills, Maryland, in which can be found miniatures, shrub roses, hybrid teas and old garden roses. Eight of her roses are tree roses or rose standards, all from Jackson & Perkins. She has grown tree roses for seven or eight years and each winter, the standards were diligently dug up, each placed in large tub and stored in a wind-protected storage area. When the time arrived in 1998 to transfer the standards to their winter home, Bartie's garden helper, Caesar Fernandez, suggested they try a new method of winter protection. The new method was used in 1998 and again in 1999, with excellent results. It will be employed again this year, thus, leaving the rose standards in place in the garden.

The method consists of three steps:

1. The supporting, main cane is wrapped with plumber's foam pipe-insulation material. It can be purchased from Home Depot. Look in the plumbing section for Foam Pipe Insulation.

This material comes in a variety of lengths and thicknesses and is pre-slit all along the tube's side for easy placement around pipes and also around rose canes. It comes in various sizes (inside diameter). The 1-inch diameter center, which should fit most rose standards, seems ideal. It sells for \$3.94 (four 3-foot sections in a package). The material is kept in place around the "trunk" or main cane of the tree rose by wrapping it--every foot or so--with duct tape, the strong silvery plumber's tape. These materials are impervious to weather and can be use again and again.

2. The upper end of the insulating material is cut to form a number of fingers before it is wrapped around the "trunk." These "fingers" are wrapped around the grafted canes in the area

where the grafted canes join the understock, and duct tape is used to fasten it in place. Additional strips of the insulation material can be cut if needed for other grafted canes.

3. Leaves (or other mulch) are placed around the root area of the understock.

This winter protection operation is performed in late November or in December. There is only modest pruning of the canes of the grafted rose at that time. In the spring, when the insulation is removed, the grafted canes are generally cut back to about 12 inches from the crown, according to Caesar Fernandez.

This simplified method for the winter protection of rose trees should encourage some gardeners to try growing them who were reluctant to do so before.

A Brief History of Standards

“It was probably between 1790 and 1800 that budding was first practiced on *R. canina* collected from the wild for standards and half-standards.” In the beginning, “...wild stems from the woods and hedgerows” were used as understock for standards. There were nurseries in Germany that specialized in obtaining and providing such understock. In 1880, E. L. Meyn planted *R. canina* understocks in rows for the first time, and also improved the stock. During the next ten years, this practice was adopted by many of the nurseries in Germany including Wilhelm Kordes. (Krüssman, The Complete Book of Roses, p.60)

Today, at Bagatelle in France, standards are used in combination with Floribundas to good effect. At the base of the standard is planted one or two Floribundas or shrub roses whose color is in harmony with the standard.

The understock used by Jackson & Perkins generally, according to Mike Cady, Horticulturist for J&P, is a double graft of **De la Grifferaie** (Hmult, deep pink, Vibert, 1845) onto **Dr. Huey** (LCl dark red, Thomas, 1914) which, in turn, has the chosen variety grafted onto it. Sometimes they use **Dr. Huey** alone for the root and main cane stock onto which the chosen variety is grafted.

Winter protection of tree roses can be a problem. In Minnesota, they use the trench method. However in warmer climates, chicken-wire cages can be used filled with straw or pine needles or other material which will remain loose and will not pack or mat and thus retain too much moisture. Or one may wish to use Bartie Cole's method, described above. An important prerequisite to winter hardiness of any rose, according to Mike Cady, is to have a healthy plant to begin with and to allow the variety to go dormant in a natural way. This would mean no fertilizer after September to stimulate growth; allowing spent blooms to produce hips if the variety is disposed; in any event, discontinue deadheading; and refraining from serious pruning.

Pruning of tree roses is a spring activity. It is recommended that they be pruned much like light pruning of a Hybrid Tea, that is, dead wood and crossed canes are removed and the remaining canes are cut back about one half.

Tree roses are available of many of our favorite varieties. Those which are available from Jackson & Perkins (in 2001) are 36" and 24". The 36-inch varieties will be **Bridal Shower**, **Outrageous**, **Peace**, **John F. Kennedy**, **Purple Passion** and **Sultry**, the J&P Rose of the Year for 2001. The 24-inch varieties include **Love Potion**, **Sunflare** and **Our Lady of Guadalupe**. Mike Cady advises that they also offer weeping tree roses, which are groundcover varieties which tend to grow laterally and thus produce a weeping effect. The “weeping trees” include **Red**

Ribbon, Baby Blanket and **Magic Blanket**. The wholesale division, Mike noted, sells over 50 different varieties of tree roses to nurseries and garden centers that sell Jackson & Perkins roses. Therefore, you may find additional varieties available at your favorite rose shopping place. Included in those available from the wholesale division in 2001 are three varieties of David Austin's English Roses, **Cotillion, English Sachet** and **Victorian Spice**. These are grafted as 36-inch trees.

At the Hortico website the following "Standard Tree Roses" are listed at \$30.00 each.

Awakening	Blessings
Alec's Red	Bonica 82
Alchemist	Buff Beauty F-1939
Ace of Hearts	Champlain
Ballerina	Canary Bird

The illustration for this article was drawn by Rose Society Member, Beth Kerr.☼

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